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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 001445

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)  
SUBJECT: AC PICKS ATIKU IN UNANIMOUS VOTE

LAGOS 00001445 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Consul Alan Latimer for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: The Action Congress (AC) National Convention nominated Vice President Atiku Abubakar as its candidate for President in the 2007 presidential elections. Nine other political parties joined the AC in supporting Abubakar, who lambasted the PDP and said Nigeria needs a leader committed to change. Poloff's interlocutors do not think the AC and All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) alliance meeting December 22 will result in one alliance presidential candidate since neither Atiku nor Buhari are willing to step down. End Summary.

Atiku Wins AC Unanimously  
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¶2. (U) The newly formed Action Congress political party held its convention December 20 at Lagos' Tafawa Balewa Square. Vice President Atiku Abubakar was unanimously voted the Action Congress' (AC) 2007 presidential candidate. News sources report the Chairman of the AC, Chief Bisi Akande, handed the party's symbolic broom and flag to Atiku, urging him to sweep away those who have misruled the country and hoist the flag so Nigerians can flock around him to collectively salvage Nigeria. Atiku has not announced who will be his running mate on the AC ticket. Jide Omoworare, Majority Leader of the Lagos State House of Assembly, told Poloff during a debrief on the convention that like Yar'Adua, Atiku will need to find a running mate from the south-south or south-east to balance the ticket.

¶3. (U) According to Omoworare, Atiku was the only contestant on the AC ticket. Delegates voted "yes" or "no" on the question of whether Atiku should be the party's 2007 presidential candidate. 5,782 of 5,888 delegates endorsed Atiku's candidacy, with only 18 delegates voting no and 88 abstaining, according to media reports. The convention was conducted without disruptions. In attendance were many of the party's recently selected gubernatorial candidates.

¶4. (U) The media reported that in his speech to the convention, Atiku said "the PDP is defunct. It is no longer in existence. As you can see, all its founders have all left." He said the country is in dire need of reforms that would lead to job creation, power supply, good roads,

security of life and property, and the fight against corruption. The media also quoted Atiku telling the convention that what Nigeria needs is "committed leadership, a leadership that is committed to change, a leadership that is committed to reforms--reforms that will benefit all the people rather than a few." Hinting at his campaign platform, Atiku said his "National Emergency Programme" will cover employment, wealth creation, security, democracy, good governance, war against corruption, education, social services, and the Niger Delta problem.

¶5. (U) Nine other parties, the Peoples Solidarity Party (PSP), Nigeria Advanced Party (NAP), United Nigeria Peoples Party (UNPP), Movement for Democracy and Justice (MDJ), Better Nigeria Democratic Party (BNDP), Liberal Democratic Party (LDC), Advanced Congress of Democrats (ACD), the Renaissance Party, and the National Community Party of Nigeria (NCPN), participated in the convention and joined in supporting Atiku's bid. These other parties, however, have very little support throughout the country and are only parties in name, according to Prince Adeyeye, contesting AC gubernatorial candidate of Ekiti State.

#### AC-ANPP Alliance Unlikely

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¶6. (C) The AC formed an alliance with the All Nigeria Peoples' Party (ANPP) mid-December and is set to meet December 22 to decide whether the AC's candidate, Vice President Atiku Abubakar, or the ANPP's candidate, former military ruler Buhari, should be the alliance candidate in ¶2007. Omoworare told Poloff December 21 the party elders have "not yet decided." He speculated that too many opposition parties to the PDP would weaken them all. As a result, Omoworare believes the parties should agree on a single standard bearer so as to present the strongest possible challenge to the PDP.

LAGOS 00001445 002.2 OF 002

¶7. (C) Prince Adeyeye, however, does not think the AC-ANPP alliance will work. Neither candidate will want to step down for the other, Adeyeye speculated, because so many people within their parties expect them to carry the presidential ticket. For example, five gubernatorial aspirants in the ANPP stood down to allow Buhari to win the presidential nomination; they will be less than satisfied if he, in turn, steps down for Atiku. Nor is it possible for Atiku and Buhari to merge into one ticket since a southerner needs to fill the vice presidential slot, Adeyeye asserted.

¶8. (C) Adeyeye predicted the alliance will come to a standstill and Atiku and Buhari will continue to run on separate platforms. Two possibilities might help the parties merge in the future, Adeyeye suggested. If Atiku faces legal problems Buhari can take the alliance ticket. Secondly, if the PDP wins a majority of gubernatorial seats April 14 then either Atiku or Buhari could step down in a last minute attempt to take the presidency April 21. The alliance also entails harmonizing candidates at lower levels, Adeyeye said, but unless this is successful at the presidential level, he doubts such harmonization will occur.

¶9. (C) AC Chairman of Lagos State, Chief Biodun Ogunleye, also believes the AC-ANPP alliance will falter. He believes the alliance will break up because neither candidate will be willing to give way to the other. Like Adeyeye, Ogunleye thought the alliance might survive if the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the Economic Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) succeed in prosecuting Atiku. Nonetheless, Ogunleye said, the PDP is strong and will put up an especially hard fight in an attempt to hand Atiku, the defector, a crushing defeat.

BROWNE